

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT LISBON 4966 ACTION SECSTATE 27 AUG 75

QUOTE

S E C R E T LISBON 4966

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DEPT PLEASE PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PO

SUBJ: MELO ANTUNES GROUP CHANGES TACTICS

REF: (A) LISBON 4840; (B) LISBON 4928

SUMMARY: COSTA GOMES'S CLOSE COLLABORATOR AND CHIEF OF CABINET FERREIRA DA CUNHA, ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE MELO ANTUNES GROUP ("THE 9"), SAYS "THE 9" ARE DETERMINED TO FIGHT ANTI-COMMUNIST BATTLE TO THE END DESPITE WITHDRAWAL OF FABIAO. PRESIDENT HAS GIVEN VASCO GONCALVES AN EXTENSION UNTIL THURSDAY, BUT "THE 9" BELIEVE COSTA GOMES MAY AGAIN

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TEMPORIZE. THEY INTEND TO "HELP COSTA GOMES MAKE UP HIS

MIND" BY A SERIES OF STRATEGIC MOVES. OPENER WAS LAST NIGHT'S SEIZURE OF J-T PROPAGANDA HEADQUARTERS, CARRIED OUT BY OTELO WITHOUT COSTA GOMES'S KNOWLEDGE. ANOTHER MOVE IS DEMONSTRATION TONIGHT AGAINST RETURN OF BRIGADIER CORVACHO TO OPORTO. IF COSTA GOMES STILL DOES NOT FEEL SUFFICIENTLY "STRENGTHENED," THEY WILL SET UP HEADQUARTERS IN THE NORTH AND GRADUALLY EXTEND THEIR MILITARY CONTROL TOWARD LISBON. THEY HAVE DECIDED ON THIS TACTIC OUT OF KNOWLEDGE THAT IF GONCALVES STAYS THROUGH SEPTEMBER HE WILL HAVE RECEIVED MASSIVE COMMUNIST AID (INCLUDING 4,000 KILOS OF GOLD FROM USSR TO PCP) AND MODERATES WILL BE FINISHED. THEY HOPE TO AVOID VIOLENCE, BUT ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT IT IF NECESSARY. THEY PARTICULARLY WANT USG TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY DO NOT INTEND TO GIVE UP THE ANTI-COMMUNIST STRUGGLE. USG DEMARCHE WAS HELPFUL AND THEY STILL HOPE EUROPEANS WILL FOLLOW SUIT. END SUMMARY.

1. SPENT TWO HOURS TODAY WITH COL. FERREIRA DA CUNHA, CHIEF OF CABINET TO COSTA GOMES AND COSTA GOME'S CLOSEST COLLABORATOR. FERREIRA DA CUNHA HAD OBVIOUSLY RECEIVED WORD FROM MELO ANTUNES GROUP THAT HE WAS TO SERVE AS A CONTACT POINT WITH ME (REFTEL A).

2. AFTER SOME DISCUSSION OF AIR LIFT, I SAID I WAS GREATLY CONCERNED BY RECENT TURN OF EVENTS IN WHICH FABIAO AND OTELO HAD BACKED DOWN UNDER COMMUNIST THREATS OF VIOLENCE AND THE DEMORALIZING EFFECT THIS SEEMED TO HAVE HAD ON MELO ANTUNES GROUP. FERREIRA DA CUNHA SAID SITUATION WAS NOT QUITE WHAT IT APPEARED.

3. FERREIRA DA CUNHA PREFIXED HIS REMARKS BY NOTING THAT HE AND ALL BUT TWO MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S STAFF HAD SIGNED THE MELO ANTUNES DOCUMENT SHORTLY AFTER IT WAS DRAWN UP. THE EXCEPTIONS WERE OFFICIALS ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE, ONE OF WHOM WAS A COMMUNIST. HE ADDED, "SIGNATURES ON THIS DOCUMENT CARRY A COMMITMENT TO FOLLOW THE ANTI-COMMUNIST STRUGGLE TO THE END, NO MATTER WHERE IT MIGHT LEAD." FERREIRA DA CUNHA HAD INFORMED COSTA GOMES OF THE LOYALTY OF THE ENTIRE STAFF TO THE MELO ANTUNES GROUP. INDICATED PRESIDENT UNDERSTOOD SINCE HE WAS HIMSEIFL IN SYMPATHY WITH 90 PERCENT OF WHAT THEIR

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DOCUMENT SAID. FERREIRA DA CUNHA HOPE WULD OT THAVE TO PARTY WAYS WITH THE PRESIDENT, BUT WOULD DO SO IF NECESSARY.

4. FERREIRA DA CUNHA SAID FABIAO HAD ACTUALLY WITHDRAWN HIS SUPPORT ON SATURDAY NIGHT, NOT YESTERDAY AS WE HAD FIRST UNDERSTOOD. OTELO HAD BACKED OUT ON SUNDAY OR MONDAY "AFTER SLEEPING WITH ISABLE DO CARMO" (THE HEAD OF PRP/BR). VASCO

GONCALVES HAD PREVIOUSLY AGREED TO RESIGN ON MONDAY, BUT SEIZED UPON FABIO AND OTELO'S WITHDRAWAL TO REQUEST DELAY UNTIL THURSDAY, AUGUST 28. GONCALVES REASONED WITH PRESIDENT THAT WITHOUT FABIAO, THERE WAS NO SUBSTITUTE GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT ACCEPTED THIS AS AN EXCUSE FOR FURTHER "VACILLATION."

5. FERREIA DA CUNHA SAID THAT "THE 9" COULD EASILY FORM ANOTHER GOVERNMENT, BUT THEY HAD NOW DECIDED ON A CHANGE IN TACTICS. THE BEST WAY THEY COULD HELP A TEMPORIZING PRESIDENT WAS TO EXERT SOME REAL PRESSURE, AND TO DEMONSTRATE THE WEAKNESS OF THE COMMUNISTS IN TERMS THAT ALL, INCLUDING THE PCP, WOULD UNDERSTAND. THEIR GOAL IS TO HAVE VASCO GONCALVES OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BY THE END OF SEPTEMBER, BECAUSE THEY KNOW IF VASCO LASTS PAST THEN IT WILL BE "TAPS" FOR THEM. THEY HAVE INFORMATION THAT FOUR THOUSAND KILOS OF GOLD WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PCP BY THE SOVIETS IF VASCO GONCALVES HANGON.

AS AN INITIAL SHOW OF FORCE "THE 9" DECIDED ON TWO ACTIONS. ONE WAS TO PREVENT THE EFFECTIVE REINSTALLTION OF BRIGADIER CARVACHO AS THE HEAD OF THE NORTHERN MILITARY REGION. THIS WOULD BE DONE BY MEANS OF DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER UNSPECIFIED ACTIONS (RADIO HAS JUST ANNOUNCED OPORTO DEMONSTRATION TONIGHT, SEE SEPTTEL). THE SECOND WAS THE ACTION LAST NIGHT AGAINST THE J-5, (PROPAGANDA DIVISION). "THE 9" HAD FIRST DECIDED TO CLOSE DOWN "DIAIRO DE NOTICIAS," "O SEculo", AND THE TELEVISION STATION. ON RECONSIDERATION THEY DECIDED TO GO AFTER "THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM", THE JF-5. COMMANDO LEADER JAMES NEVES "ONE OF OUR BEST MEN" AGREED TO MOVE IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIVING AN ORDER FROM OTELO. OTELO VACILLATED, SUGGESTING AT 1 A.M. THAT PRESIDENT BE ADVISED. FERREIRA DA CUNHA TOLD HIM TO ACT ON HIS OWN AND HE FINALLY DID (REFTEL B). FERREIRA DA CUNHA NOW CONCLUDES OTELO IS BACK IN THEIR CAMP, BUT IS NOT SECRET

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SURE FOR HOW LONG.

7. "THE 9" ALSO CLOSED DOWN POWER THROUGHOUT PORTUGAL YESTERDAY (POWER WAS OUT FOR AN HOUR ABOUT NOON) BUT THIS WAS DONE ONLY "AS AN EXPERIMENT." PLANS ALSO EXIST TO CUT OFF WATER SUPPLIED IF NECESSARY.

8. FERREIRA DA CUNHA IS NOT CERTAIN WHAT WILL HAPPEN THURSDAY, BUT "THE 9" PLANS TO MOVE AHEAD WITH ITS NEW STRATEGY IF THE PRESIDENT AGAIN RELAXES THE DEADLINE FOR RESIGNATION. THEY HAVE ALREADY DESPATCHED EMISSARIES TO MILITARY CENTERS IN THE NORTH. "THE 9" WOULD SET UP HEADQUARTERS THERE, STATE THEY INTEND TO RID THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MILITARY OF COMMUNISTS AND DEMAND THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND THE VASCO GONCALVES BE DISMISSED.

ONLY COSTA GOMES COULD STAY. THE MILITARY OPERATION WOULD THEN MOVE GRADUALLY TOWARD LISBON STEADILY ISOLATING IT FROM THE REST OF THE COUNTRY.

9. FERREIRA DA CUNHA SAID "THE 9" WAS TOTALLY CONFIDENT OF SUCCESS. "WE HAVE THE PEOPLE AND THE MAJORITY OF THE MILITARY BEHIND US," HE SAID. "WE CAN PUSH THE COMMUNISTS INTO THE SEA." THE ONLY SUPPORT THAT VASCO HAS IS IN THE PCP STRONGHOLDS OF LISBON AND SETUBAL AND IN THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE NAVY. "THE 9" RECOGNIZES THE POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENT PCP RETALIATION IN LISBON, BUT HAVE DECIDED "EVEN TO RISK OUR FAMILIES IF NECESSARY."

10. ASKED WHY COSTA GOMES CONTINUED TO TEMPORIZE, FERREIRA DA CUNHA TRACED COSTA GOMES'S DEEP PERSONAL AND LONG STANDING FRIENDSHIP WITH VASCO GONCALVES. ELVEN MONTHS AGO FERREIRA DA CUNHA TOLD COSTA GOMES THAT A RUPTURE WITH VASCO WAS INEVITABLE, AS COSTA GOMES'S PHILOSOPHY WAS WESTERN, WHEREAS VASCO'S ORIENTATION WAS TO THE EAST. COSTA GOMES WAS NOW AWARE OF INSTANCES WHERE VASCO GONCALVES HAD DIRECTLY BETRAYED HIM BUT WAS STILL RELUCTANT TO MOVE AGAINST HIS FRIEND. FERREIRA DA CUNHA SAID HE HAD EVEN BEEN WORKING ON COSTA GOMES THROUGH HIS WIFE, WHO UNDERSTOOD THE NEED FOR VASCO TO GO. BUT COSTA GOMES IS STILL HESITANT.

11. FERREIRA DA CUNHA SAID HE DID NOT INFORM COSTA GOMES
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DIRECTLY OF "THE 9'S" ACTIVITIES, BUT "HE KNOWS WHAT WE ARE DOING AND UNDERSTANDS IT." FERREIRA DA CUNHA HAS ASKED FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO AVOID BREAKING MILITARY DISCIPLINE WHEN THE GROUP ACTS. COSTA GOMES HAS AGREED. FERREIRA DA CUNHA IMPLIED COSTA GOMES WAS TACITLY ACCEPTING "THE 9'S" ACTIVITIES AS A CONVENIENT WAY OUT OF HIS DILEMMA. ALTHOUGH HE STILL RESPECTS HIS BOSS, HE IS OBVIOUSLY HAVING TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING HIM AT THIS POINT.

12. I TOLD FERREIRA DA CUNHA WE WERE TRYING TO GET EUROPEANS TO PUT PRESSURE ON COSTA GOMES. HE SAID U.S. DEMARCHE HAD BEEN EFFECTIVE AND THAT EUROPEAN PRESSURE WOULD HELP.

13. FERREIRA DA CUNHA SAID HE HAD BEEN VERY FRANK WITH US (AND HOPED NOTHING HE SAID WOULD GET OUT) BECAUSE HE WANTED USG TO UNDERSTAND THAT PORTUGAL DID NOT WANT COMMUNISM AND THAT ANTI-COMMUNISTS WERE A DETERMINED AND COHESIVE GROUP. THEY STILL HOPED FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION BUT WOULD USE FORCE IF NECESSARY.

14. I TOLD FERREIRA DA CUNHA THAT USG SUPPORTED "THE 9'S" EFFORTS TO RID PORTUGAL OF COMMUNISM. TOLD HIM TO LET ME

KNOW IF THEY HAD ANY REQUESTS OF US. HE ASKED IF OUR CONSUL
IN OPORTO COULD BE TRUSTED. I SAID YES. "THEN MAKE SURE
HE HAS A SECURE MEANS TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU," HE SAID.
CARLUCCI
UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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